

Travel Health



Travel Consultation

During a travel consultation, we seek to understand your trip and provide destination-specific health advice customised to your medical needs. Issues that may be discussed at this time include the destination, type of trip, season, anticipated risks and individual medical issues that may impact the journey.

In addition, we will discuss eating/drinking safely, insect avoidance measures, pre-existing medical problems, vaccinations and the need for prescription drugs. Standby medications may also be provided. A doctor's consultation is required for vaccinations or medications being prescribed.

Medical advice should be sought at least 4 to 6 weeks before departure. This increases to 6 months if travelling for an extended period or if planning to reside overseas. Remember — it is never too late to seek advice.

Book a travel consultation with one of our doctors to minimise your travelling risks.





Pre-departure vaccinations

Vaccinations protect against diseases you might be exposed to during travel. For many countries, no vaccinations are necessary apart from booster doses of those generally given during childhood, i.e. Polio, Tetanus, Diphtheria and possibly Measles. On the other hand, a number of more exotic vaccines may be recommended for those venturing off the beaten path. On average, about 30-80% of travellers going to developing countries will suffer a travel-related illness — some with potentially serious consequences.

DISEASES YOU MAY ENCOUNTER

INFLUENZA (Worldwide)

The most common illness that travellers pick up and influenza vaccination is advised, especially if travelling in winter.

COVID-19 (Worldwide)

This needs no introduction, and travel advisories and requirements change daily. Vaccination is advised, and IMC is well-placed to help with any pre-departure testing and documentation that may be needed.

HEPATITIS A (in Asia-Pacific, Africa and South America):

Hepatitis A is a viral liver disease and is the most common vaccine-preventable health problem faced by travellers after influenza. Hepatitis A can be commonly contracted from contaminated food or water or direct contact with an infected individual. Even those staying in '5-star resort accommodations may be exposed.

HEPATITIS B (worldwide):

Hepatitis B is also a viral disease of the liver. It is transmitted through blood, blood products, or body fluids, i.e. contaminated blood transfusions, sharing contaminated needles, sexual contact, acupuncture or tattoos. In addition, dental procedures may carry a high risk of Hepatitis B transmission. It is present all over the world but is more prevalent in developing countries. Therefore, vaccination is recommended for those who are long-term travellers or residents overseas.



POLIO (less developed countries):

Poliomyelitis is a viral disease that attacks the body's nerve cells, causing paralysis. Vaccination is recommended for those travelling to endemic countries.

TYPHOID (less developed countries):

Typhoid is a bacterial infection transmitted through contaminated food, water or ice, raw seafood (in particular shellfish), raw fruit and vegetables, milk and milk products. It is often acquired from contaminated fingers handling food. Typhoid vaccination is strongly recommended for travellers to areas where environmental sanitation is poor.

TETANUS AND DIPHTHERIA (worldwide):

Tetanus occurs in all countries and can be fatal. It is caused by bacteria, which enter the body through a wound. Diphtheria is caused by bacteria that infect the throat, releasing a toxin that paralyses the heart and nervous system. Although it occurs worldwide, it is more prevalent in less developed countries.

PERTUSSIS (WHOOPIING COUGH):

A highly contagious bacterial infection of the lung which causes repeated bouts of cough lasting 2-3 months, and babies and children are particularly ill. Children are given the vaccine as part of the childhood vaccination schedule from 2 months, and travellers should have had a booster within the last 10 years. In addition, a combination of tetanus, diphtheria and whooping cough (pertussis) vaccine is available.

JAPANESE ENCEPHALITIS (Asia):

A viral infection transmitted by a mosquito that breeds in rice paddies. Vaccination is recommended for long-term travellers depending on their itinerary, travel time, and residents in at-risk destinations.

RABIES (worldwide except Singapore, Australia, New Zealand, Oceania, the UK, parts of western Europe and the Caribbean):

Rabies is a fatal infection transmitted to humans via the bite of a rabid animal. The pre-exposure rabies vaccine is recommended for long-term travellers who cannot quickly access post-exposure vaccination and those who may be occupationally exposed.





MENINGITIS (Sub-Saharan Africa, Northern India, Nepal; Mongolia, the Middle East and other endemic areas):

Meningitis is an infection of the lining of the brain. It is transmitted from person to person through droplet infection (the same way you catch a cold). Therefore, vaccination is recommended for certain areas.

YELLOW FEVER (sub-Saharan Africa, parts of South America):

Yellow fever is the only WHO compulsory vaccine. A vaccination certificate may be required to enter an endemic country or upon leaving an endemic country and entering the following country. Yellow fever vaccinations can only be obtained from registered vaccination centres, including International Medical Clinic.

CHOLERA:

A bacterial infection that causes severe diarrhoea is usually caused by infected water due to poor sanitation. A vaccine is available and recommended only in situations where outbreaks are likely (e.g. working in disaster relief, slums and refugee camps).

MALARIA (Asia, Africa, Western Pacific, Central and South America):

Malaria is caused by a tiny parasite carried by a mosquito of the anopheles species. The parasite is transmitted to the victim by a bite. Those travelling to risk areas should seek advice on the following:

- Mosquito avoidance measures
- Antimalarial medications
- Recognition of symptoms of malaria
- Malaria self-treatment

DENGUE FEVER (Tropical regions):

A mosquito-borne viral illness that is endemic to Singapore, we get regular outbreaks. However, due to the environment or activities, you may be at greater risk of exposure while travelling. Prevention of mosquito bites is the best protection as there is no specific treatment if infected. A vaccine is available for those with at least one previous infection, and a blood test is required before starting the vaccination course.



TUBERCULOSIS (worldwide):

Tuberculosis is a bacterial infection involving the lungs and other body organs. It may be spread via droplet infection (someone coughing nearby, causing the germ to enter the air we breathe) or by ingesting unpasteurised milk. The incidence is increasing in western countries but is 40 times greater in this part of the world. It is a very significant risk in those under five years of age. The introduction of the BCG vaccination at birth has led to a genuine decrease in cases of tuberculous meningitis in children. Many countries have different attitudes to the BCG vaccine and when it should be given. Still, the consensus is that young children living in high-risk areas for any length of time should be considered for vaccination. Those over six months of age will require a tuberculin skin test before being given the injection.

POST-TRAVEL CONSULTATION

Fever, unexplained rashes, diarrhoea and other symptoms soon after return from a trip should be checked by a doctor as quickly as possible.

If you have returned from a long trip of many months in a developing area, a post-travel consultation may be helpful to screen for any diseases you may have picked up.

